

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20593

STATEMENT OF CAPTAIN WILLIAM D. MARKLE, DEPUTY CHIEF, OFFICE OF MERCHANT MARINE SAFETY, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD AND NAVIGATION OF THE HOUSE MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES COMMITTEE REGARDING H.R. 5808, A BILL TO REVISE AND IMPROVE THE LAWS RELATING TO THE SHIPMENT, DISCHARGE, AND PROTECTION OF SEAMEN, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE.

I AM CAPTAIN WILLIAM D. MARKLE, DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE OFFICE OF MERCHANT MARINE SAFETY, U.S. COAST GUARD.

I AM PLEASED TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY TO DISCUSS H.R. 5808, A BILL TO REVISE AND IMPROVE THE LAWS RELATING TO THE SHIPMENT, DISCHARGE, AND PROTECTION OF SEAMEN, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

THE COAST GUARD SUPPORTS THE INTENT OF THIS BILL. THE OUTDATED AND OFTEN CONFUSING CURRENT STATUTES CONCERNING THE EMPLOYMENT OF SEAMEN HAVE BEEN IN NEED OF REVISION FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. THE PROHIBITION OF FUNDING FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF THE SHIPPING COMMISSIONER FUNCTION BY EITHER THE COAST GUARD OR CUSTOMS CONTAINED IN THE FY-80 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION APPROPRIATIONS ACT HAS APPARENTLY PROVIDED THE IMPETUS TO MODERNIZE THIS BODY OF LEGISLATION.

IN ITS PRESENT FORM THE BILL:

1. RETAINS THE MEANINGFUL PROTECTIVE PROVISIONS OF CURRENT LAW APPLICABLE TO THE INDIVIDUAL MERCHANT SEAMAN.
2. RETAINS THE ISSUANCE OF CERTIFICATES OF IDENTIFICATION FOR SEAMEN.

3. PROVIDES FOR THE UNIFORM APPLICATION OF WRITTEN SHIPPING AGREEMENTS AND USAGE OF OFFICIAL LOG BOOKS.
4. AUTHORIZES SEAMEN TO MAKE ALLOTMENT AGREEMENTS.
5. PERMANENTLY REMOVES RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SUPERVISION OF SHIPMENT AND DISCHARGE OF MERCHANT SEAMEN FUNCTIONS FROM THE GOVERNMENT.
6. RETAINS THE SERVICE OF CONSULAR OFFICIALS FOR THE PROTECTION OF SEAMEN'S RIGHTS IN FOREIGN PORTS.
7. INVOKES A UNIFORM PROCEDURE FOR THE DISPOSAL OF DECEASED SEAMEN'S EFFECTS.
8. CLARIFIES STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS THROUGH THE REPEAL OF ANTIQUATED AND UNNECESSARY STATUTES WHICH NOW SERVE LITTLE USEFUL PURPOSE.

WITH THESE PROVISIONS THE BILL ESTABLISHES A PRACTICAL MEANS OF PROVIDING FOR THE SHIPMENT AND DISCHARGE OF SEAMEN WHILE PROTECTING THEIR HISTORIC RIGHTS UNDER EXISTING LAW. FURTHER, THE ELIMINATION OF UNNECESSARY GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITY IN THIS AREA WILL PROVIDE THE GOVERNMENT A SUBSTANTIAL FISCAL SAVING OVER THE LONG TERM.

IN RETROSPECT I BELIEVE THIS BILL REPRESENTS AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP IN ATTEMPTING TO UPDATE A PORTION OF OUR ANTIQUATED MARITIME STATUTES. IN THIS REGARD, MR. CHAIRMAN, REST ASSURED THE COAST GUARD IS PREPARED TO COOPERATE TO THE FULLEST EXTENT IN THIS AND SIMILAR ENDEAVORS.

I HAVE APPENDED TO MY STATEMENT A NUMBER OF TECHNICAL AND EDITORIAL AMENDMENTS WHICH THE COAST GUARD BELIEVES WILL ENHANCE THE BILL.

THIS CONCLUDES MY PREPARED STATEMENT. I WILL BE HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.